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Book Notices

Dr. Hermann L. Strack is well known among students of post-biblical Hebrew. His pointed Hebrew texts of the Mishnah tracts, *Joma*, *Aboda Zara*, *Pirqe Aboth*, *Sanhedrin*, *Makkoth*, and *Pesahim*, supplied with valuable footnotes and complete glossaries and even at times with the German translation of the original, have helped greatly in generating a desire and the ability to master Talmudic literature; while his *Einleitung in den Talmud* has given a clear presentation of the spirit of that monumental work not only not generally understood, but often misrepresented.

Once more Professor Strack claims the attention of the Hebrew specialist with a highly interesting publication issued at Leiden by A. W. Sijthoff's Uitegevers Maatschappij, 1912. The production referred to is the *Babylonian Talmud according to the Munich Codex Hebraicus*, 95. The work is handsomely printed, reproducing faithfully in every detail the script of the copyist, and is beautifully bound in two large folio volumes of 577 leaves to correspond to the pagination of the manuscript. In these 577 pages are included the entire Mishnic and Talmudic texts with the exception of a few pages supplied by Professor Strack in a separately published supplement containing an introduction explanatory of the character and history of the original manuscript.

The manuscript was studied and described before Strack by Hajjim Joseph David Azulai, B. Beer, M. Steinschneider, R. Rabinovicz Salomon Taussig, and M. Altschüler. It contains in addition to the Mishnic and Talmudic texts other material. The Talmudic text is preceded by "Melekeheth Hammishkan," a treatise on the construction of the tabernacle; an alphabetical poem from the pen of Jehosiphja Binjamin; and "Seder Olam Rabba" (a historical record). The material following the Talmudic texts embraces the "Seder Tanaaim Veamoraiim" (a list of the teachers whose names are found in Mishnah and Talmud); formulae of documents; a divorce bill dated Paris, Iyar 5th, 5068 (1308); additions by Jehosiphja Binjamin, the first owner of the manuscript; ordinances of Rabbenu Gershom; ordinances of Rabbenu Jacob Tam; and a genealogy of the owner.

The Talmudical material in the Strack edition is in accordance with the arrangement of the material in the manuscript—an arrangement totally different from the popular editions of the Talmud. Thus for example, the first volume of the Strack edition opens with Sabbath and is followed by Erubim, Pesahim, Hagiga, Rosh Hoshanah, and other tracts. The examples here given indicate the peculiarity of order prevailing in the work before us. However, so as to facilitate the finding of Talmudical treatises in accordance

with the order generally obtaining in editions of the Talmud, our editor supplies each of his two volumes with a double table of contents—the first being the order of the treatises according to the manuscript, while the second is the order followed in existing editions of the Talmud with the corresponding place of each treatise in the manuscript.

Like the manuscript, the Mishnah is always printed close to the inside margin of the page, while the Talmudical text incloses the Mishnah on all three sides, very much like the inclosure of the Talmudical text by the commentaries on the Talmud found in existing editions, as those of Wilna, Warsaw, and other places.

The text on each page of the Strack edition is $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The following facts may be gathered from the introduction furnished by Professor Strack. The copyist up to p. 575*a* was Salomon ben Samson. His date as indicated on one of the pages was Kislev 12th, 5103, corresponding to November 12, 1342. The person for whom the manuscript was written was undoubtedly Jehosiphja Binjamin, though Mattathia, the son of Joseph, is the name substituted on pp. 501*a* and 563*b*, where the name had been erased. It should be noted that Jehosiphja Binjamin added numerous glosses to the Talmudic text. Jehosiphja Binjamin claims to have been descended from Benjamin, the son of Samuel of Contances, Normandy, a French Talmudist and liturgical poet living in the first half of the eleventh century. The second owner of the manuscript was undoubtedly Mattathia, the son of Joseph, referred to above. It remained in his family for some time. In 1480 Jacob, the son of Nathan of Perugia, sold the manuscript in Padua to a German. Other Germans in succession owned it. In 1755 it was undoubtedly taken to Pfersee near Augsburg. Then it found its way to a monastery at Pollingen near Landeshut and in 1806 it came into possession of the Royal State Library at Munich.

The copyist was, as the manuscript shows, not a thorough Talmudic scholar. It is contended by Strack that the many mistakes which occur in the manuscript are traceable to the haste of its production and the writer's lack of thoroughness.

Although the manuscript has its shortcomings, it is certainly a valuable textual help. The best Talmudical text is imperfect. This condition is due, as Jastrow says in his *History and the Future of the Text of the Talmud* ("Publications of Graetz College," I, 1897) to two causes: "the migration of the material from land to land, and the fallibility of human memory, especially when dependent on oral transmission" (p. 82).

It is needless to substantiate this contention by historical data—for the facts are well known—that the Talmud was carried from country to country and that it was written by copyists from memory altogether. Again says Jastrow in the same paper:

The main variations and corruptions of the Talmudic texts arose during the period following the reduction to writing, when each school procured a

number of copies made by professional copyists. As soon as copying became a profession, the texts passed from the control of their traditional guardians and became dependent on the greater or less faithfulness and care of the writers—nay, even on the greater or less distinctness of the copyists' handwriting.

Who were the copyists? That they were not abundantly blessed with worldly goods, we should surmise, even were we not told in the Talmud that the Men of the Great Assembly spent twenty-four days in fasting and praying, that the copyists of *S'farim*, *T'fillin*, and *M'zuzoth* might never grow rich, for, if they did, they would soon abandon their occupation.

Troubled minds are not apt to be very accurate. The Bible was under the control of the Massorah which had counted the words and the letters of the entire Scriptures, and given immutable fixity to spelling, to marks and inter-spaces; but there was no such standard in existence for Talmudic books, and their texts were subject to the influence which affected the copyists and the Jewish people at large [*ibid.*, pp. 90-91].

The Munich manuscript was undoubtedly produced under similar conditions. As stated before, it has textual value and deserves to be consulted by the Talmudic student. It is because of this, its value, that Dr. Strack's publication should find a place in every library containing a Talmudic section.

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